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Marianne Grünell and Anneke Voeten

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State of the Art

Feminism in Plural: Women's Studies in Turkey

Marianne Grünell and Anneke Voeten

FACULTEIT DER SOCIAAL CULTURELE WETENSCHAPPEN, FREE UNIVERSITY OF LEIDEN, THE NETHERLANDS

'We don't believe in miracles, we rely on them', this according to the poster on the wall of the NGO secretariat of the Habitat II conference in Istanbul. I¹ read the slogan as I tried in vain to trace Şirin Tekeli for an interview. According to the programme, the ex-professor of political sciences and well-known feminist Tekeli had just delivered a lecture on 'Women-friendly Space'. Istanbul played host to the UN Habitat II conference in June 1996, and I thought – naively perhaps – this would be a good opportunity for 'a state of the art' piece on women's studies in Turkey. But this provincial from Amsterdam felt quite lost in a part of the world which relies on miracles, and where cities have populations in the tens of millions and conferences have 20,000 participants. Fortunately, with a little help from my friends, this project was saved from premature failure. Before I get down to the nitty gritty, I give you this illustration to sketch my frame of reference and its limits. I visited the Women's Library and Information Centre in Istanbul and was ultimately able to interview Şirin Tekeli and Ayşe Düzkan, a radical feminist, who recalled that Tekeli had introduced the word 'feminism' into Turkish. Tekeli herself says: 'Oh, no, I wouldn't have dared in 1982. We got Giselle Halimi, a French-Tunisian feminist to do it for us.'

Both Tekeli and Düzkan discussed feminism in the 1980s with me, and once back home in the Netherlands I pursued my investigations at the women's studies library in Amsterdam, the IIAV.² For Turkey 1990 was a landmark year – not only was the first shelter for battered women opened

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there, but that year also saw the launch of the Women's Library and Documentation Centre.³ Also in 1990 the first centre for women's studies was started at the University of Istanbul, followed in subsequent years by the University of Ankara, the Çukurova University in Adana and the Marmara University in Istanbul (N. Arat, 1996: 406). The Bosphorus University in Istanbul and the Middle East Technical University in Ankara have both offered undergraduate courses in women's studies since the 1980s, and the latter now has a MA programme in gender studies. The centres initiate and coordinate interdisciplinary women's studies research, offer seminars outside the regular curriculum and courses which are integrated in the curriculum. The current aim is to initiate a PhD programme. Women's studies are usually developed within disciplines such as political science, sociology, economics and philosophy. But the centres not only concentrate on curricula and research, they are also action oriented. Just to give one example here: the centre in Istanbul launched a petition to change civil law which would lead to more equality between men and women, while students initiated a campaign against virginity checks. Second-wave feminism has also penetrated government and its institutions: a 'General Directorate on the Status and Problems of Women' has been in force since 1990. But this 'state of the art' won't elaborate on these institutions here, it rather gives an impression of the content of women's studies, with a focus on the history of feminist waves in Turkey, and its relationships with Kemalist, Marxist and Islamic traditions.

THE 1980S: ANOTHER MILITARY COUP AND ANOTHER FEMINIST WAVE

Looking back in hindsight to the 1980s surge of 'the second feminist wave' in Turkey cannot be done without reference to the prevalent political situation. When I interviewed Şirin Tekeli and Ayşe Düzkan, there was a lot of speculation about a possible military coup, which would be the fourth in 36 years.⁴ The underlying cause was the failure of right-wing secular parties to cooperate in a coalition government. Tansu Çiller, leader of the True Path Party (DYP), proved unable to work with Mesut Yılmaz, leader of the Motherland Party (ANAP). This opened up a potentially central role for Necmettin Erbakan's Islamist Welfare Party (Refah Partisi) in the country's administration. Although the Welfare Party came out of the December 1995 elections as the biggest – although with a very tiny majority – the question was whether the army, defenders of the secular state par excellence, would allow the Islamists to exercise political power at his highest levels. As I talked with Şirin Tekeli in June 1996, she voiced the sentiments of what are called in Turkey 'defenders of the civil society': 'I am a democrat; I have to accept the existence of the Islamic party and

the results of the elections, but I am afraid of both scenarios.' While writing this article the situation changed as Tansu Çiller, Turkey's first female prime minister, broke her election promises and began negotiating – successfully – with the Islamists. After the novelty of the first female prime minister had worn off, Turkey then saw the inauguration of its first Islamist prime minister.

The differences encapsulated in these two 'primeurs' not only illustrate Turkey's history, but are also only too apparent in the streets: veiled women, either in elegant up-to-the-minute Islamic fashion or decked from head to foot in black; equally elegant worldfashion-style power suits; teenagers in knee-high boots and the latest fashions – they are all here in Istanbul, one of four major cities in this country of 60 million. Tekeli speaks diplomatically of a mosaic in which the different cultures – urban, rural – and differences in standard of living – wealthy or poverty line – can coexist side by side. These differences are also more than obvious when we begin talking about women in Turkey. This is a country with a female illiteracy rate of 31 percent (10 percent among males), but also the highest percentage (32 percent) of female academic personnel in the world (Acar, 1991; Noordenbos, 1994–95). Yet few of these women have reached the top jobs, for example as dean, in any of the universities. The fact Turkey had a female prime minister should not cloud the fact that less than 3 percent of politicians are women (Arat, 1989; Güneş-Ayata, 1995). Sexuality is strongly regulated in this country; abortion may be legal, but married women need their husband's consent. Almost the whole population is Muslim, with Sunnis in the majority and a minority of Alevis, a heterodox, humanist variation within Shii Islamic teaching. Although the number of 'unbelievers' is probably growing, the majority of both groups are practising and a minority of Sunni Muslims adhere to a form of political Islam. The most important platform of this minority is the Welfare Party (Refah Partisi). At the same time, the whole state infrastructure has been based on secular principles along Western nation-state lines. Mixing politics and religion is prohibited by law and the whole legal system, including family law, has been stripped of religious principles. Since the 1950s, Turkey has undergone enormous migration from rural to urban areas. This has led to problems, especially as urban infrastructures have been unable to handle the continual influxes from the countryside. Rural and city cultures also collided, a situation which was not helped by extremely high inflation and persistent unemployment; according to official statistics, 20.5 percent of urban women are unemployed, while total urban unemployment is 11.7 percent (*The Status of Women in Turkey*, 1994: 33). This is a country which is also extremely ethnically diverse; its oppression of Kurdish identity has the characteristics of an internal 'dirty war'. Turkey is also assured of a place on international political agendas when it comes to human rights violations. Clearly, this is a country of great

contrasts, where it was possible for the army to seize power back in 1980, banning all political activities and outlawing political parties. And yet at the same time it is also a country where a new feminist movement could emerge not too many years later which is able to exercise influence at national level.

Feminists organized several public actions in the 1980s, when almost all political activists were restricted. Under these conditions, the feminist movement became one of the most important civil and democratic forces in Turkey. In 1986, an ad hoc committee of feminists organized a petition campaign to ask the government to comply with the 1979 UN Convention on the Abolition of All Discrimination against Women. This Convention passed through parliament in 1985 because the Turkish government wanted to participate in the UN conference on women's issues in Nairobi. However, little has been done to enforce the Convention. About 7000 women signed the petition, which was passed from hand to hand in order not to violate the law. Students were prohibited from signing as university disciplinary regulations prohibited the expression of opinions on the country's problems. If they did sign, they risked expulsion from the university. On 8 March 1986 the petition was presented to parliament. In 1987, feminists organized the first street demonstration – with 3000 participants – since the military coup of 1980. This protest against wife-battering was inspired by a rejected petition for divorce by an abused spouse. The judge in the case praised the husband: 'You do not leave a women's back without a stick, nor her belly without a child.' The demonstration represented the start of a campaign which lasted until the first shelter was opened for battered wives. Another action tackled sexual harassment. The 'purple needle campaign' was so called because in the past a needle with a coloured head was used by women to warn men who came too 'close'. The next feminist action took place in January 1989 as a reaction against a decision by the Constitutional Court on Article 438 of the Penal Code. This Article stated that if a woman involved in a rape case was a prostitute, then the rapist's sentence could be reduced by up to two-thirds. A rape case was brought before the Supreme Court which decided that the rape article did not contravene Article 10 of the Constitution which regulates equality between the sexes. The Court supported its judgment by claiming that Article 10 was designed to protect the rights of 'honest women' only. In response, feminists caused a 'scandal' by declaring 'we are all prostitutes'. In the end the National Assembly abolished Article 438.

This period of intensive discussions and actions culminated in 1989 in the first Feminist Congress held in Ankara and ending with a manifesto which summarizes ten years of feminist thinking and an official ideological divorce between feminism and socialism (Tekeli, 1992a, 1995⁵). These public actions are not only the result of a broad-based women's movement but – as we shall see – also of a revolution in ideas.

THE KEMALIST HERITAGE REVISED: BEYOND THE LAWS

Şirin Tekeli's life story illustrates the history of feminist thinking in Turkey. Daughter of a mother who was professor in philosophy, she studied political sciences in Switzerland and returned to an academic career in Turkey. After the coup in 1980 she and almost 1500 colleagues – most of them leftist, as Tekeli is herself – left the university in protest against the anti-democratic restructuring of the universities and the abolition of autonomy. She then devoted her energies full-time to feminism, not only through her academic work, but also as one of the initiators of the second feminist wave. With other academic feminists, she stripped away dominant historic perceptions of the first feminist wave: not only a suffrage movement in the United Kingdom and the United States, but in Turkey also.

Here, as elsewhere, the first feminist wave struggled for women's access to the public sphere. Reforms took place between 1926 and 1934, suffrage for women, the secularization of marriage – which meant abolition of polygamy and spousal repudiation, and more equality between men and women in marriage, divorce, property and inheritance matters. Women also received access to all levels of education. These reforms were part of the modernization programme that designed the Turkish national state. Better known as Kemalism, this programme takes its name from the nationalist leader, Mustafa Kemal, the later Atatürk. Serpil Çakır, who is researching women's magazines from the late Ottoman period – a collection which is considered one of the treasures of the women's library in Istanbul – when this nationalist movement developed, points out the large number of women's periodicals at the beginning of the century. Around 1913, there were no less than 45, most of which survived for around ten years. 'By studying these magazines, we were able to discover the extent of women's influence and the powerful way in which they couched their demands', she says. 'They resisted sexual violence, demanded the abolition of polygamy, and fought for equal rights at both economic and political levels' (Tankeren, 1993: 43). Some of these demands were met within the Kemalist programme which saw formal emancipation as an inherent part of modernization, and used women, as Kandiyoti claims, as symbolic pawns (Kandiyoti, 1989: 145).

The second feminist wave began by criticizing this half-emancipation which had realized certain formal opportunities for women, but kept them dependent through a civil code which, for instance, ruled that the husband was head of the family and required married women to obtain their husband's permission before performing paid work. This latter Article was, in fact, abolished in the 1980s following pressure from the women's movement. Zhera F. Arat analyses the heritage of Kemalism as 'the Republican Reconstruction of Tradition':

In spite of these reforms, the Kemalist state continued to employ a traditional definition of female roles and emphasized reproduction and child care as the primary functions of women. Treating women as symbols and as tools of modernization and Westernization, rather than as equal and full partners of men, the Kemalist reforms intended to achieve little in changing women's lot. . . . The restrictive effects of the Kemalist reforms and mentality continue to the present. To this day, both education and employment of women have remained limited; they have been mostly accessible to upper class urban women, but have failed to liberate even that segment of the population. (Z. Arat, 1994: 72)

In her article 'Emancipated But Unliberated?', Deniz Kandiyoti explains the limitation of the Kemalist programme to elite urban women as follows: 'women's education has acted not so much as a means of mobility but as a means of class consolidation, because these women might have posed less of a threat than upwardly mobile men from humbler origins' (Kandiyoti, 1987: 323).

Tekeli also shares this criticism on the limitations in Kemalist feminism. She calls it 'state feminism' (Tekeli, 1992), a framework which is unable to explain why, for example, women are so grossly underrepresented in politics. Writing from a Marxist conceptual framework in the early 1980s in the reader *Women in Turkish Society*, she described women's political disinterest. Ultimately, she concluded then that this was generated by a capitalistic production system which was characterized by a specific division of labour between the sexes. In this system, men are responsible for production and women for reproduction, resulting in their exclusion from political and social decision-making. These relations were ideologically reproduced in political culture and it is this ideology which leads women to believe that politics is not their territory. This is a view in which asymmetrical relations between the sexes are understood from production relations and in which more equality depends on a change in those relations, on a socialist revolution (Tekeli, 1985). However, from the beginning of the 1980s, Tekeli and many with her began searching for different questions and different answers.

THE LEFT-WING HERITAGE REVISED: NEW QUESTIONS AND NEW ANSWERS

Tekeli recalls how it all began:

I was asked by the writers' and translators' collective *Yazko*, who'd organized meetings on issues such as women, sexuality, intellectuals, to set up a journal on women's issues. I worked with five other women who were also interested in women's issues, but we didn't have the words, we didn't dare, we were afraid that everybody would be against us – the military, the Kemalists and the Islamists. The time simply wasn't right. But by talking together, finding the words and the strength, we formed what you would call a consciousness-raising-group. Here we discovered the issues and problems which

proved characteristic of the second feminist wave: the reality that the private is political. In 1982, we organized a seminar where Giselle Halimi reintroduced the word feminism for us. Reactions were enthusiastic and discussion groups mushroomed. More women formed small groups, and 40 wanted to set up a journal. From small beginnings this idea soon became a page in the *Yazko* weekly *Somut* (Concrete). In those days, political parties were outlawed, but we were talking political issues. It is a miracle that we had the courage, and were tolerated by the military. Many women came from leftist political parties or groups and were marxist oriented. This was the first time they were able to think from a women's perspective and shake off marxist concepts, not only on the issue of who is being oppressed by what, but also on forms of (democratic) organisation. We discovered just how thoroughly Turkish society was permeated by patriarchal and sexist concepts and the 'fact' that daily private life is the real arena of patriarchy. After six months we stopped writing for *Somut*. In 1983 we continued with our own women's organization, *Kadın Çevresi* (Women's Circle), which was a broad program for women's assistance on health and legal questions, violence and divorce, but we also had a women's café and facilities for publishing and translating. Because of financial problems, this program was only partly realized. We translated feminist classics, such as Simone de Beauvoir and Alice Schwarzer; we started our own journal *Feminist*. The first issue was published 8 March 1987 and editorial goals were stated: We have been reflecting on the nature of our exploitation for some time, but this journal gave us the courage to speak out about what affects us personally. As you know, we, the feminists, think the private is political. (cited in Y. Arat, 1994: 103)

Ayşe Düzkan, one of the writers to the journal, recalls: '[the journal] brought a fresh breath to social opposition . . . questioned hierarchy, even authority . . . [and] brought a frivolous, naive, cheerful definition to the word feminist that is customarily used as an obscene word' (cited in Y. Arat, 1994: 103).

It was also in this period that reactions against their independent course began to emerge from the leftist movement, which had brought forth many feminists. In her analysis of those reactions, Fatmagül Berktaş writes that the left may have approved to women organizing separately, yet the left remained convinced that women would ultimately fight against the system side-by-side with men. Meanwhile the feminists were also substantially suspected of 'bourgeois tendencies'. She describes the unique use by the left of the concepts love, responsibility and trust when calling on politically active women, concepts which imply that: 'You are opposed to sharing and partnership, so you must hate all men as such; you want to lead a life of independence and freedom, so you must be unreliable and irresponsible; you want to develop your own individuality, so you must be after your own selfish interests; you no longer behave in so docile and conciliatory a fashion, so you are cold and loveless' (Berktaş, 1995: 259). Ultimately Berktaş comes to the same conclusions as Sheila Rowbotham in 1973 in her *Women's Consciousness, Men's World*: 'men's revolution has a symbolism for the outer shape of things, and the inner

world goes along on the old tracks'. Berktaý's article is published in Tekeli's reader *Women in Modern Turkish Society* (Tekili, 1995), which is referred to frequently in this article. In 1993 Yeşim Arat analyses the reader as typical for the 1980s: it reflects the plurality of women's viewpoints, the concepts used are 'patriarchy' and 'gender': the collection portrays 'the historically specific subjectivity' of women examining their subjugation as well as power (Y. Arat, 1993: 129).

Tekeli continues:

As the movement grew it was no longer the exclusive preserve of well-educated, middle-class, professional women over 30, but now including other groups – younger women, women working in factories and shops and female students. The movement radicalized and reformist and radical wings appeared. Yet the different groups didn't decry each other and this was a new phenomenon in Turkey. What they shared was the realization that we wanted to work outside the political party structure and that we wanted to be non-hierarchical.

One of the expressions of differentiation within the feminist movement was the appearance of a new magazine in 1988, *Sosyalist Feminist Kaktüs* (Socialist Feminist Cactus). The Kaktüs group wanted space for its own perception of feminism and argued: 'ideology alone was not what generated male–female inequality, rather the network of gender as well as production relations accounted for this inequality' (cited in Y. Arat, 1994: 104).

The magazine *Pazartesi* (Monday), which appeared in 1995, is the most recent effort in feminist publishing. Düzkan, one of its editors, places the journal in context:

Pazartesi tries to form an answer to the backlash of feminism; we want to be professional and popular, local – which means Turkish – and 'politically correct' – that is feminist. We try to have our own agenda and write about women's issues from the point of view of women. Typical for our journal is also that we write about news, for instance on a whore house strike which took place in Istanbul.

And typical for Düzkan is perhaps her sense of humour; she writes columns on issues as varied as the use of make-up, which she sees as a way of expressing oneself publicly, a social code, a way of distinction. Düzkan argues: 'Humour is important in Turkey; readers like it, it gives them weapons against men. As patriarchy works through words, let the words then work for you.'

Magazines such as *Somut*, *Feminist*, *Sosyalist Feminist Kaktüs* and *Pazartesi* distinguish themselves from the ageing women's magazine *Kadınca*, which has a large circulation and where Duygu Asena was already writing on the position of women in the late 1970s. Asena is arguably the best-known feminist in Turkey. Besides magazine journalism, she

is also author of two bestsellers – *Woman Has No Name* (1989) and *In Fact There Is Also No Love* (1989) – in which she speaks freely about sex and relationships and about the real resistance against career women. Ten years on and 'the *Kadınca* perspective' and its limitations are being analysed from a critical feminist perspective. Ayşe Saktanber points out that although *Kadınca* writes freely on women's sexuality and although it introduces the '3 K formula' to define the three basic elements of orgasm, *klitoris*, *kafa* (head) and *koca* (husband), the latter shows that women's legitimate sexuality is within marriage – and for *Kadınca* also. *Kadınca's* world is urban, middle class, and it is from that perspective that the magazine raises discrimination of women in the public and private sphere, albeit in a challenging and direct manner (Saktanber, 1995). Ayşe Düzkan is also critical, but emphasizes the development expressed in publications like *Kadınca* and a similar publication, *Elele*:

The magazines published for women readers address a certain type of audience. This is a new type of readership. In Turkey, an urban mass of working women has emerged, some married, some living alone. These magazines address them and they sell well; so they can finance themselves. This is an indication of real support. (Ahiska, 1994: 4–5)

At present, this new urban middle class may form no more than a small segment in society – it is part of the 18 percent of working women who work outside agriculture⁶ – but it continues to grow.

THE PERSONAL IS POLITICAL

As elsewhere, a revolutionary core concept of the Turkish second feminist wave is that the personal is political. But what does it mean in Turkey? Tekeli speaks of 'the real arena of patriarchy'.

The most piercing example is the case of sexual violence. This was, therefore, an important issue for feminism. To undermine beliefs and prejudices we always worked with facts – proofs, testimonies – but we lacked this material on sexual abuse and rape so other methods had to be applied. We started public actions such as publicly declaring 'we are all prostitutes'. We did the same in our campaign against battering – the court case against the wife who didn't get a divorce because her husband was beating her. In this case, we published the book *Cry, Let Everybody Hear* in 1988, in which 23 battered women told their stories.

The agenda-setting role of the women's movement and its success in politicizing the personal is demonstrated by the policy and in the reports of the Directorate General on the Status and Problems of Women (part of the State Ministry for Women's Affairs and Social Services). The Directorate gives

financial support to shelters for battered women and in one official publication, violence against women is recognized as 'a serious problem', whose 'real dimensions' remain unknown (*The Status of Women*, 1994: 35). The Directorate also points in this context at articles in the Criminal Code and criticizes its basic principles. It states that sexual assault and rape as such are not seen as crimes, as the penalties depend on the status of the victim: a single woman, a married woman or a virgin. As a critical conclusion the Directorate states that the crime depends, according to the law, not on the act of rape, but on the virginity of the victim. Thus, the Criminal Code protects General Morality and Family Order rather than the individual woman. Another point of criticism are the virginity checks, which were introduced in student hostels. Girls had to undergo an examination to determine whether their vaginal membrane was still intact. This practice led to widespread protest and discussion. The student anger came to a head after some girls committed suicide. Female students of the University of Istanbul raised a petition against this practice.

Physical abuse and domestic mistreatment is another issue (*The Status of Women*, 1994: 38–9). From the scarce research which has appeared (see, for example, Yüksel, 1995) the Directorate concludes that violence occurs across the social classes; that 45 percent of men think husbands have the right to beat 'disobedient' wives; that 66 percent believe men have absolute authority at home and women have to obey them; 32 percent of men and 20 percent of women approve of men beating their wives. Moreover, the Directorate challenges the state itself directly when it remarks that the recognition of violence against women as a basic violation of human rights does not mean that 'this recognition has become ingrained in the public opinion, both men and women, and state institutions' (*The Status of Women*, 1994: 40).

Just how public the most private is, can be concluded from the decisive role of virginity in laws and regulations, which is rooted in the practice of – borrowing from Kandiyoti – 'corporate control over female sexuality'. The whole immediate social environment ensures a young woman's virginity – significant for family honour or lineage – is saved for the right man, chosen by the family. A lot of marriages are still arranged; in 1968 the percentage was 67 percent, according to Kandiyoti (1987: 325). In the extended family pattern, women marry into the household of the man's family and the young bride is subordinated to her mother-in-law. In this system she establishes her own separate nuclear household when her father-in-law dies and his sons become head of their own households. The mother-in-law generally stays with her eldest son. Kandiyoti points out the paucity of power a newly-wed woman has in such an arranged marriage and how much power can be derived over time once she herself becomes a mother-in-law (Kandiyoti, 1987). Although this family system is eroding as migration to the cities increases and a growing number of

people live more or less independently in nuclear families, it is clear that the world of the magazine *Kadınca* is far removed from this type of family relations. Protests against the double standard in judgments on sexual violence and against virginity controls are confronting a massive wall of tradition which was almost untouched by Kemalist reforms.

SECULARISM REVISED: THE ISLAMIC CONFRONTATION

Untouched by the Kemalist reforms, raised in a patriarchal conservative, lower middle-class culture and migrating from rural areas and provincial towns to the metropolises – that is the sociological profile of Islamic women Feride Acar (1995) sketches in her article 'Women and Islam in Turkey'. Is it the case that 'the Islamic discourse is able to address those very realms of women's lives ignored by the Kemalist', as Nükhet Sirman (1989: 29) states? This question brings us to the third movement within Turkish society, alongside Kemalist and left-wing traditions, with which feminism has to relate: political Islam. With only a few percent more votes than the DYP and ANAP and only a total of 22 percent of the vote, the Islamist Refah Partisi was still the largest political party. What is striking is the high number of women in the electorate and in this party's membership. And it is a bitter pill for the secular feminist movement to conclude that it is the Islamic movement which can mobilize the greater number of women. Major mobilization has surrounded the abolition of the prohibition on headscarves in state institutions, including universities. Cihan Aktaş is one of the intellectual spokespeople; she considers feminism as 'a fantasy of an elite', imported from the West (cited in Öztürk, 1992: 53). In her two books *Woman, The Exploited* (1984) and *The Adventure of Being a Woman* (1986) Aktaş analyses the oppression of women from an Islamic point of view, in which she argues from the perspective of the complementary nature of both sexes. Kemalism and its formal equality ideology is, of course, one of the greatest bones of contention.

The Islamic movement holds secularism and modernism responsible for the humiliation and exploitation of women and tries to appeal to dissatisfied and disillusioned women through promises of emancipation via Islam, according to Feride Acar. In the cited article 'Women and Islam in Turkey' she analyses why Islam exerts such a powerful attraction to women. She studied the contents of three Islamic women's magazines – *Kadın ve Aile* (Women and Family), *Bizim Aile* (Our Family) and *Mektup* (Letter). In all three magazines, a woman's role as wife, mother and homemaker was emphasized above any other role she may possibly fulfil. Highly controversial issues, which in conservative interpretations are part of the *sharia* (Islamic law) – polygamy, a husband's right to physically punish his wife, two women's testimony being considered equal to one

man's in a court of law – were largely ignored. Along with her analyses of the magazines, Acar interviewed female Islamic students, asking about their fears and expectations. She concludes here that women expect security from Islam; it justifies traditional sex roles. One of the students told her: 'but since the man I will marry will share my world view, he will know that he is obliged to take care of me. The most important duty of women under Islam is to give birth to children and to raise them properly. I am going to the university in order to be able to educate my children in the best way. I am increasing my knowledge to this end. I have no expectation of earning money' (cited in Acar, 1995: 58). The values with which many women and girls are raised are in conflict with perceptions of progress, equal justice and secularism which are disseminated by schools and the state. The veil and the segregation of the sexes offer a security, a protection from the potential threats of modern secular lifestyles and the appeals of Westernized women, especially concerning sexuality. The more liberal atmosphere of the big city is frightening and makes women feel insecure; the rules of Islamic modesty and veiling requirements are bound to ease the pressure on these women and protect their sense of self (Acar, 1995).

Yeşim Arat (1995) maintains a different approach. Where Acar tries to understand the attraction of Islam to women, Arat concentrates on the relationship between feminism and Islam. She points out the unintended consequences of women's Islamic activism. The concept of individual rights especially, for instance to cover themselves, could help women discover and challenge Islamic restrictions on their liberties. In the context of politics that aims to be democratic as well as secular, recognizing Islamic women for what they are is a step towards democratization (Y. Arat, 1995: 77). That is why feminists did not support the campaign against the freedom to wear the veil, on which Tekeli writes: 'feminists opt for respecting individual women's choices and are sceptical about the legitimacy of the politics of radical secularism which may hinder the building of a tolerant and pluralistic society, while at the same time blocking islamic fundamentalism' (Tekeli, 1992b: 141).

In personal conversations with both Düzkan and Tekeli this point of Islam and feminist options is of irrevocable importance. When I ask Düzkan whether I have understood her correctly if I label her attitudes on, for example, fashion as liberal, I appear to have pushed the wrong button. She responds with:

I can't identify with Western ideology, we are anti-imperialist and anti-United States. Religion is part of our national identity, Islam is an organic part of this country. Turkey has no own liberal tradition; still we must find our own way to democracy. It can't be imported from the West.

Tekeli also points out this paradox:

We never had a Voltaire; we don't have Turkish sources for democracy; our own sources are religious. Our history is one of a centralized state, a military based empire; a strong state and a weak civil society; individuals didn't exist here.

Back at home, I reread what Yeşim Arat says on this subject in 'Women's Movement of the 1980s in Turkey: Radical Outcome of Liberal Kemalism?' (1994). The main difference between liberal or Kemalist feminists and the younger generation is their view of Islam and secularism, she writes. The first group sees Islam as the biggest threat to male-female equality and some women have even argued that a war has to be waged for secularism before women's equality to men or liberation can be sought. The younger generation of feminists gives priority to women's liberation, rather than to secularism, although they agree upon the patriarchal context of Islam, which is seen as the reason why it could not be reconciled with feminism (Y. Arat, 1994: 108–9). Arat concludes that the new feminist movement in the 1980s unintentionally helped to realize the Kemalist reforms in that it worked to reconcile secularism and democracy (Y. Arat, 1994: 110).

With all these different heritages and traditions, the feminist option for respecting individual choices and moving towards a tolerant and pluralistic society is a significant and understandable choice, whether these concepts originated in the West or not. Women's studies research and reflections on the desires and fears of all the different women in Turkey, on their experiences and social position can only underpin this option. In this context, Deniz Kandiyoti's suggestion to broaden the agenda of women's studies acquires additional meaning:

... to include the whole range of social institutions and practices which are implicated in the creation and reproduction of gender hierarchies, that we pay particular attention to the tensions and contradictions implicit in different institutional spheres, and that we probe into the production of specific forms of masculinity and femininity in the Turkish context. (Kandiyoti, 1995: 315)

NOTES

1. The 'I' in this article is Grünell; she carried out the interviews in Istanbul.
2. The International Information Centre and Archive for the Women's Movement.
3. For the history of the library and its foundation see *Women's Memory* (1992).
4. Coup d'états occurred in 1960, 1971 and 1980.
5. We refer in this article to the 1995 English translation of the publication; the German version was published in 1991.

6. In 1990 82 percent of working women worked in the agricultural sector, of which 89 percent as unpaid family workers. The labour participation rate of women in the rural areas was more than 48 percent, while in the cities 15 percent (*The Status of Women*, 1994: 32–5). The same proportion (15 percent) work in the informal sector, according to estimations (Özbay, 1995).

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